

*Quicumque uult saluus esse.*

WHENEVER the Athanasian Creed is under discussion the retranslation of the opening clause is one of the suggestions most commonly made. This suggestion rests on the assumption that there is some difference in meaning between *saluus esse* and *saluari*, and that this difference ought to be brought out. It is assumed that *saluari* is the stronger expression of the two, and should be translated 'to be saved', but that some milder phrase, such as 'to be safe', would be a more correct rendering of the *saluus esse* of the Creed.

The object of this note is to shew that the two expressions are absolutely identical in meaning.

It is universally admitted that the Creed is not older than the fifth century, and it follows that no guidance towards the correct interpretation of its language can be obtained from classical usage. Students of patristic Latin know that it is very far removed from the language of Cicero or of Vergil. New words have been coined to express new ideas, and the meaning of old ones has often changed. St Augustine<sup>1</sup> reminds us that *saluare* has no pre-Christian existence at all. '*Salus enim latinum nomen est. Saluare et Saluator*<sup>2</sup> non fuerunt haec latina antequam ueniret Saluator: quando ad latinos uenit et haec latina fecit.' It is therefore impossible to go behind the ordinarily accepted meaning of *saluari*. It can only be translated 'to be saved': the only question is whether it is or is not identical in meaning with *saluus esse* (or *feri*).

St Augustine<sup>3</sup> is perfectly explicit on the point. Commenting on St John viii 32 'Et ueritas liberabit uos', he says, 'Hoc uerbum Dominus a libertate posuit *Liberabit uos*. Nihil est enim aliud proprie *liberat* nisi *liberum facit*: quomodo *saluat* nihil aliud est quam *saluum facit*: quomodo *sanat* nihil aliud est quam *sanum facit*.'

That he regarded the two expressions as interchangeable is further attested by numerous passages scattered up and down his writings. One quotation will be sufficient.

'Fecerunt saluum iudices eum (*sc.* Israel) ab Allophylis liberantes. Non sic saluat Iesus.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Sermo* 299 (v 1213 E ed. Bened.). I am indebted to the Dean of Westminster for this reference.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mart. Cap. 5 § 510: Cicero Soterem Saluatorem uoluit nominare.

<sup>3</sup> *In Ioan. tr.* xli § 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Sermo* 299 (v 1181 E ed. Bened.).

A glance at a critical edition of any Latin father shews that the copyists used either expression indifferently, e. g. the following extracts from Hartel's *Cyprian*.<sup>1</sup>

1. 'Qui autem tolerauerit usque ad finem hic saluus erit.' S. W. saluus erit] saluabitur R (335<sup>20</sup>).

2. 'Non est enim nomen aliud sub coelo datum hominibus in quo oportet saluari nos' (A. L. M. 83<sup>7</sup>).

saluari nos] nos saluos fieri B.

An examination of the New Testament gives the following results:—*σῶζω* is used in forty-five places. In thirty-one<sup>2</sup> of these the Old Latin<sup>3</sup> and the Vulgate agree in rendering by *saluus* with the auxiliary. In four<sup>4</sup> places both render by *saluo*. In five places<sup>5</sup> the Old Latin has *saluus* with the auxiliary and the Vulgate *saluo*. In four places<sup>6</sup> the Vulgate has *saluus* with the auxiliary and the Old Latin *saluo*.

The Old Latin text of Acts xxvii 31 is not extant: the Vulgate has *salui fieri*.

Clearly St Jerome regarded the expressions as interchangeable, and the point is further illustrated by the fact that (according to the received text) he translates 1 Tim. ii 15 by *saluabitur*<sup>7</sup> in one place and *salua fiet* in another.<sup>8</sup>

In Romans xi 26 both the Old Latin and the Vulgate read *saluus feret*, and the verse is quoted so by Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine. But Irenaeus and Hilary quote it *saluabitur*.<sup>9</sup>

As the Creed is attributed to Caesarius of Arles by some scholars, the following extract from his writings is of interest. 'Quod ideo sicut in diluuiio non saluatus est nisi qui inter arcam Noe fuit inuentus ita diuersae fidei homines extra ecclesiae domum salui esse non possunt.'<sup>10</sup> Clearly he does not recognize any difference between the two expressions, and his thought is very similar to that of the Creed. The Latin

<sup>1</sup> I owe these extracts to Mr Burkitt.

<sup>2</sup> Mt. x 22; xix 25; xxiv 13, 22; Mk. x 26; xiii 13, 20; xv 32; xvi 16; Lk. xviii 26; Jn. v 34; Acts ii 21, 47; iv 12; xi 14; xvi 30, 31; Romans v 9, 10; viii 24; ix 27; xi 26; 1 Cor. i 18; iii 15; v 5; x 33; 2 Cor. ii 15; 2 Thess. ii 10; 1 Tim. ii 4; Titus iii 5; 1 Pet. iii 20.

<sup>3</sup> The MSS vary a little. I have followed the text printed by Peter Sabatier (Rheims, 1742).

<sup>4</sup> John x 9; Acts xv 11; Eph. ii 5; James v 20.

<sup>5</sup> Lk. xiii 23; 1 Cor. xv 2; 1 Tim. ii 15; 1 Pet. iv 18; Jude 5.

<sup>6</sup> Lk. vii 50; viii 12; xxiii 35; 1 Thess. ii 16.

<sup>7</sup> *Ep. ad Algasiam quaestio 4* (Migne P. L. 22 p. 1015): Sabatier *ad loc.*

<sup>8</sup> *adv. Jovin.* i 6 (Migne P. L. 23 p. 217): Sabatier *ad loc.*

<sup>9</sup> Sabatier *ad loc.*

<sup>10</sup> Migne P. L. lxvii 1051. Caesarius generally uses 'securus' to mean 'safe', e. g. *Hom. de Poenit. agenda* (P. L. lxvii 1081), though sometimes he uses it in the classical sense, e. g. *ad Sanctimonialia* (*ib.* p. 1122).

commentators upon the Creed are unanimous in their interpretation of the opening clause.

1. *Fortunatus*<sup>1</sup>. 'Quicumque uult saluus esse, &c. Primo ergo omnium fides necessaria est sicut apostolica docet auctoritas . . . constat enim neminem ad ueram posse peruenire beatitudinem nisi Deo placeat et Deo neminem placere posse nisi per fidem.'

2. *Alcuin*<sup>2</sup>. He does not comment upon the opening clause, but referring to the 'Qui uult ergo saluus esse' after the statement of the Trinity, says, 'Hac igitur credulitate nec Trinitas a nobis confunditur . . . sed certam et immutabilem catholicae fidei confitemur et sequimur regulam per quam beati apostoli . . . gratiam meruerunt habere diuinam, et spem perennis adepti sunt uitae, et coelestis regni beatitudinem sortiti sunt sempiternam.'

3. *Bruno*<sup>3</sup>. 'Non dicit Velis aut non saluus eris sed Quicumque uult, quia Deus omnipotens nullum hominem inuitum aut coactum trahit ad fidem. Sed quicumque uult saluus aeternaliter esse . . . necessitas illi est ut teneat catholicam fidem . . . quia sine fide nullus saluus esse potest.'

4. *Peter Abailard*<sup>4</sup>. 'Quicumque uult saluus esse . . . uoluntate quippe propria non coactione saluamur aliena.'

5. *Hildegard*<sup>5</sup>. 'Qui sic non crediderit de die saluationis eradicabitur.'

The foregoing passages prove that if the author of the Creed had written 'Quicumque uult saluari' no different interpretation would have been put upon his words. The most accurate rendering, therefore, of 'Quicumque uult saluus esse' is 'Whosoever willeth to be saved'. To substitute the milder 'to be safe' would be nothing but an indefensible mistranslation. The author meant to say the strongest thing that could be said and has always been understood to have said it by those who were best qualified to estimate the exact value of his language. Whether he was justified in saying it is a different question, and one which lies outside the scope of this note.

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<sup>1</sup> *P. L.* lxxxviii 586.

<sup>2</sup> *P. L.* cxlii 561.

<sup>3</sup> *P. L.* cxcvii 1065.

<sup>4</sup> *P. L.* ci 83.

<sup>5</sup> *P. L.* clxxviii 629.